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ABSTRACT

A Saturday morning youth program was developed by Gustavus Adolphus College (Minnesota) for the purpose of providing field expereinces for pre-student teaching elementary education majors. Children from the community attend enrichment classes in social studies and science, taught by teams of students from the college of education. One objective of the program is to provide a teaching environment where elementary education majors can relate theory to practice under the direct supervision of their instructor. Concepts of instructional theory are developed in a concrete manner and students in these methods classes learn to teach within a meaningful, realistic context, using the many different resources which surround them and a variety of teaching strategies. The student teaching teams are responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating a series of inquiry-based lessons related to particular science or social studies topics. This paper describes the program and discusses the reasons for its success, its contributions to the teacher education program at the college, and how it can be easily replicated in other communities. (JD)

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COMMUNITY YOUTH PROGRAM: A MODEL FOR PROVIDING FIELD EXPERIENCES FOR PRE-STUDENT TEACHERS

A paper presented
at the 67th National Conference
of the Association of Teacher Educators
in Houston, Texas
on February 17, 1987

by

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The Gustavus Adolphus College teacher education program is committed to providing pre-student teaching field experiences for its elementary education majors. In 1980-81 it became impossible to find adequate placements in local schools for all of the students enrolled in the social studies and science methods course. Teachers were not teaching science or social studies during the time that the placements were needed; students would arrive in the classrooms only to find that the teachers were still finishing a reading or language arts assignment and were not going to have time for science or social studies that day; or students were in classrooms where social studies and science meant reading the textbook and responding to chapter questions. If students were to be provided experiences that developed the experiential approach and methods of inquiry which were being taught in their methods course, an alternative means of providing a practicum had to be found.

The program which was developed invites elementary school-aged children to campus on Saturday mornings each semester for a series of social studies and science classes. Children pay a small fee which is used to subsidize the cost

of materials and supplies. The classes are planned and taught by elementary education majors enrolled in the social studies and science methods course.

Thus far over 300 different children, some living as many as 50 miles from the campus, have enrolled in the classes. The program is advertised through the Community Education Bulletin which is distributed to residents of four communities, announcements in area newspapers, school newsletters, and flyers sent home with children in the local public and parochial schools.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Each semester the Gustavus elementary education majors who are enrolled in the social studies and science methods course are organized into teams of 3-4 students each. The teams are responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating series of inquiry-based lessons related to particular science or social studies topics. The social studies classes have focused primarily on different regions of the world, with specific concentration in recent years on the Scandinavian countries, German-speaking countries, the Far East, African cultures, and South American countries. Science topics have included: Weights & Balances; Egg, Tadpoles and Frogs; Wild Animals of Southern Minnesota; Bugs, Bugs, and More Bugs; Collies and Other Dogs; Minnesota Rocks and Soils; Balloons, Airplanes and Rockets; Cats; Snow

and Snowflakes; Let's Explore Water; Soap and Soap Bubbles; Kitchen Chemistry; Kitchen Physics; Spiders; and Volcanoes.

Students are expected to design action-oriented lessons which integrate concepts and methodologies learned in their math, reading, language arts, music and art methods courses and which also build on the liberal arts component of their academic program. The aim is for students to develop both the philosophical bases and the skills required of teachers if their students are to become knowledgable, active and thoughtful world citizens of the future. Thus, this field experience provides opportunities for both the teachers and the children to develop decision-making and problem-solving skills, and it also aids in the development of global and futuristic perspectives.

Since the lessons presented must be appropriate for children who span the entire elementary school years, students use learning centers as a primary means of organizing the instructional activities. Very little class time is devoted to whole-group instruction; the emphasis is on small group and individual learning experiences. The college students utilize cross-age and cooperative groups as effective means of instruction. Indeed, the Saturday classes provide a rich environment for exploring individual differences, the ways children learn, and alternative grouping arrangements for classrooms.

CHARACTERISTICS LEADING TO SUCCESS

What has made this practicum experience so successful? What does it contribute to the teacher education program at Gustavus Adolphus College? Why can the model be so easily replicated in other communities? These questions will be addressed in relationship to guidelines and standards that have been suggested for field experiences (Webb, Gehrke, Ishler, and Mendoza, 1981) and to characteristics which have been identified as instrumental in effecting organizational change (Zaltman, Duncan & Holbek, 1973).

The field experience has clearly defined objectives. The Saturday morning youth program was developed to serve two very distinct purposes: 1. to provide a teaching environment where elementary education majors can relate theory to practice under the direct supervision of their instructor, and 2. to provide science and social studies enrichment classes at minimal cost for elementary children in the local and surrounding communities. These objectives are clear to both the students and the community.

Concepts of instructional theory are developed in a concrete manner. Students in these methods classes learn to teach within a meaningful, realistic context, using the many different resources which surround them daily and a variety of teaching strategies. They expand far beyond the traditional textbook and classroom lecture approach. Their Saturday morning experiences stimluate student involvement

in classroom activities and discussions during the week. Because the Saturday program provides a common setting for their practicum experience, the examples it provides for classroom presentations are meaningful and also credible.

The practicum experience is an integral part of the total teacher education experience. The campus-based practicum complements the school-based experiences students have in the math and reading methods courses. Students appreciate the freedom of working within their own classroom setting. Without the limitations and confines set forth by the curriculum and organizational structure of a classroom teacher, they have many unique opportunities. They are responsible for the entire class -- developing objectives, planning lessons, selecting and constructing instructional materials, and evaluating the outcomes of the learning experience. Team-teaching requires that they learn to cooperate with their peers, sharing ideas and materials, as well as responsibility. Students have an opportunity to visit with parents who bring and pick up their children from these classes. When appropriate, students conduct field excursions or invite guest speakers into the class and learn the importance of careful preparation and follow-up for such experiences. Few students have these independent teaching opportunities prior to their student teaching experience.

Students receive details of the specific requirements related to this field experience at the start of the

semester. They perceive the experience as equitable, whereas when students are placed at different grade levels with different amounts of time allocated to the subject area and different expectations from the cooperating teachers, they frequently perceive the experiences as inequitable.

The Saturday morning practicum experience motivates students to raise questions, seek answers, and further develop their teaching skills. There is a high level of learner involvement from the students as well as the children. The pre-service teachers build connections and seek advice and resources from faculty who teach general education, special methods and other liberal arts courses. The questions they ask about the required reading assignments frequently are either directly or indirectly related to their Saturday morning experiences. Course evaluations indicate that students involved in the campus-based program express stronger agreement with the statements "I have deepened my interest in the social studies content area" and "I have deepened my interest in the science area" than did students who participated in the previous school-based program.

The field experience is economical. The program is completely self-supporting and, in fact, brings in funds which supplement the department's budget for curriculum materials. Materials and supplies for this practicum are purchased with funds from the children's participation fees.

At the conclusion of each semester, all non-consumable materials are inventoried into the curriculum laboratory for use by future elementary education majors. Thus, the program supplements the department's meager budget for curriculum materials. Additional savings occur because no dollars need be expended for paying honoraria to cooperating teachers, inservicing cooperating teachers, or travelling to school sites for supervision, costs frequently associated with practicum experiences.

The Saturday program makes <u>efficient</u> use of both student and faculty time. It maximizes the amount of time spent on activities directly related to teaching. Students do not lose time in travel to and from the schools. They teach in classrooms that are familiar to them and use materials and resources which are easily accessible to them or which they have specifically requested.

The campus-based program is <u>less complex</u> for faculty supervisors to arrange than are school-based practicums. They spend no time making placements and little time scheduling students. Valuable time and energy can be devoted to advising and assisting students as they plan for the classes.

The practicum experience can be <u>evaluated easily and regularly</u>. Each Saturday faculty supervisors witness firsthand the teaching of each of the students in the class. Thus for each lesson taught both written and oral feedback

is provided students on the specific strengths and weaknesses of their lessons and of their teaching. Faculty can monitor the entire process from planning through evaluation and thus provide students with more immediate and more frequent high quality feedback on all aspects of the teaching process. Progress on specific teaching behaviors, as well as attitudes and interpersonal skills, can be carefully monitored and evaluated from week to week.

The team organization also provides a convenient structure for peer evaluation to occur. The formal and informal communication links that are established among the students, educational faculty and general education faculty extend into the student teaching semester. Students develop some ease with critiquing one another, talking with faculty about ways to upgrade their background knowledge, requesting materials, talking with parents and being supervised by their cooperating teacher and college supervisor. They view teaching as a act of cooperation rather than isolation.

The program is <u>perceived as highly valuable</u> by the teacher education students. In response to the statement "The practicum was a valuable part of this course," end-of-semester student ratings increased from an average of 3.67 on a 5-point scale when the practicum was school-based to an average of 4.84 for the campus-based practicum. The practicum is regularly listed as the single most valuable component of the course.

Conclusion

Gustavus Adolphus College has developed an effective, campus-based practicum experience for the elementary social studies and science methods courses which also fills the need for enrichment programs for elementary school-aged children in the local and surrounding communities. The model program has many characteristics which make it easy for other campuses in other communities to replicate.

The program has high potential for expansion and adaptation. For example, on the Gustavus Adolphus College campus, the Saturday program's early success led to the development of a one-week language and culture day camp for elementary children which is offered each year during June. This summer experience provides a more intensive study of the cultures that have been introduced in the Saturday classes during the academic year and also provides an opportunity for selected teacher education students to receive a financial stipend while they gain additional teaching experience. A similar summer program for science is in the early stages of development. The elementary program's success served as both an inspiration and a model for the recent initiation of a similarly structured science program for junior and senior high school students. Although the program is only in its first year, evidence indicates that it too will flourish.

References

1. Webb, C., Gehrke, N., Ishler, P., & Mendoza, A. (1981). Exploratory Field Experiences in Teacher Education, A Summary Report of the Commmission on Exploratory Field Experiences of The Association of Teacher Educators.

2. Zaltman, G., Duncan, R., & Holbek, J. (1973). Innovations and Organizations, New York: John Wiley and Sons, p. 10-50.

The Gustavus Adolphus College Language and Culture Program
provides Saturday classes and a summer festival
for children in Grades K-6

Children who participate in this program will:

1. learn about South American countries and/or the Soviet Union,
2. develop foreign language skills, Spanish and/or Russian, and
3. explore how Russian/South American cultures have influenced our state and local community.

PHASE II: Spring 1987

Hike the Andes Mountains!

BUENAS DIAS! Come join us to explore life in the world's longest mountain chain and learn some Spanish, the language spoken there.

10:00 - 11:00 a.m. LIFE IN CHILE - 2nd floor, Old Main, GAC
A land of extremes, Chile has one of the driest deserts, some of the heaviest rainfall, and the second highest mountain range in the world. What is life like for the children, mothers and fathers in Chile? Explore with us!

11:00 - noon LIFE IN PERU - 2nd floor, Old Main, GAC
The land of the Incas, Peru has deserts, snow-capped mountains, and jungles. We will explore this country's people, their animals (the alpaca, vicuna, llamas and sheep) their ancient mummies, their Indian villages, their modern cities. Come join us!

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE

Learn to speak the Russian language through structured lessons, songs, dance and games. Enrollment is open to both new and continuing students.

10:00 - 11:00 a.m. - Room 205, Vickner Hall, GAC

Meeting dates: Saturdays February 28, March 7, 14, 21

Fees: $6.00 per class

Instructors: Gustavus Adolphus College faculty and students

PHASE I: Fall 1986
October 4 - November 15

Cruise the Rivers!
Argentina
Brazil
Russia

PHASE II: Spring 1987
February 28 - April 11

Hike the Andes Mountains!
Chile
Peru
Russia

PHASE III: Summer 1987
June 15 - 19

South America
Russia

Children may register for as many parts of the program as they wish.

Registration for the summer LANGUAGE AND CULTURE FESTIVAL will permit active participation in learning about all of the countries.

REGISTRATION FORM

Please register my son/daughter_____who is now in grade_____

in_____School for the following sessions:

_____CHILE _____PERU _____RUSSIA

Enclosed is a check (made payable to GAC) for $_____to cover fees ($6/class).

Parents' Names:_____

Address:_____

_____Phone:___/_____

Please send registration and fees to: Dr. Ann M. Lydecker, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN 56082

For more information, call or write:

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GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE YOUTH PROGRAM

1986 - 1987

South American Studies

and Russian Language Experiences

for Children in Grades K-6

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

St. Peter, MN 56082-9989

SCIENCE CLASSES FOR SPRING 1987

Gustavus Adolphus College and its Department of Education offer the following courses for children in Grades K-6.

CATS, CATS, CATS 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.
Cat, panther, leopard, puma, tiger, lion, lynx...come study the varieties of cats. Fat, lean, spotted, mean...some you might have never seen. Domestic or wild...learn them by name, learn them by sight. Study the characteristics of carnivores, mammals, and felines.

SNOW AND SNOWFLAKES 11:00 - 12:00 noon
Explore the ground's white covering. Examine differences in the size and shape of snowflakes. Experiment with snow and the weather conditions that bring different types of snow. Bring your questions about snow and snowflakes. We'll help you find the answers.

MEETING DATES: Saturdays, February 28; March 7, 14, 21

MEETING PLACE: 2nd floor, Old Main, Gustavus Adolphus College Campus

FEE: $6.00 per class INSTRUCTORS: GAC faculty and students

For further information, call Ann Lydecker (931-7455/1608).

REGISTRATION FORM

Please register my son/daughter _____ who is now in grade _____ in _____ School for the following class:

____ Cats, Cats, Cats ____ Snows and Snowflakes

Enclosed is a check (made payable to GAC) for _____ to cover fees ($6/class).

Parents' Names _____

Address _____

_____ Phone: _____

Please send registration and fees to: Dr. Ann Lydecker, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN 56082-9989

GUSTAVUS YOUTH PROGRAM SPRING WORKSHOPS

Join us for this special one-week workshop session. Come from 9:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 11, to explore one of the following topics:

ANIMALS IN THE SPRING

How do animals change as we move from winter into summer? Learn about the habits of different animals and how they adapt to temperature changes. Where can we expect to find animals in the spring? What will they be doing? Come prepared to take a hike if the weather is agreeable.

SWEDES COME TO MINNESOTA

Explore what Minnesota was like at the time the first Swedish settlers arrived. Why did they settle in Minnesota? Where did they build their homes? What did the houses look like? What did they eat? What was life like for the children in those early years? Come prepared to take a walk, if weather is agreeable.

ECUADOR

Where is it possible to throw snowballs from one hemisphere to another? In Ecuador, the only country where latitude and temperature both reach zero. Explore the highlands -- its volcanoes, poncho-clad Indians, and Quito, the capital city. Explore the coastal lowlands where coffee, cacoa, rice, bananas, rice and balsa are raised. Explore the Amazon jungles -- the ocelots, jaguars, and vampire bats. See how the old and new mix in the lives of the people of Ecuador.

Any child in grades K-6 is invited to register for the classes.

Meeting Place: 2nd floor, Old Main, Gustavus Adolphus College Campus

Fee: $5.00 Instructors: GAC faculty and students

For further information, call Ann Lydecker (931-7455/1608).

REGISTRATION FORM

Please register my son/daughter _____ who is now in grade _____ in _____ School for the following class:

____ Animals in Spring _____ Swedes Come to MN _____ Ecuador

Enclosed is a check (made payable to GAC) for $5.00 to cover fees.

Parents' Names _____

Address _____

_____ Phone: _____

Please send registration and fees to: Dr. Ann Lydecker, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN 56082-9989